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# ENGLISH IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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GERTRUDE EARHART

Grammar Grade Supervisor

AND

JENNIE SMALL

Primary Supervisor, Boise Public Schools, Boise, Idaho

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During a period covering the last six years an investigation and an experiment in the improvement of English usage and the mechanics of English have been carried on in the Boise elementary schools in an effort to define our situation and to find a more exact means of measuring and a more satisfactory method of improving it.

## AN INVESTIGATION IN ENGLISH USAGE

In an attempt to get an effective method of dealing with the common errors in English speech the teachers in the elementary school were asked to observe with care for a given period the mistakes in the use of English which their pupils made in conversations on the playground, in the schoolroom, and in recitation. The teachers then listed these errors and reported.

The lists of this first report were collated and classified. When they had been classified the fact which stood out most clearly was that the multitudinous errors in speech are due to the frequent repetition of a few incorrect forms. Practically all the errors reported could be classified under six heads, namely, verb errors, double negatives, mispronunciations, misuse of pronouns, adverb errors, and colloquialisms. Mispronunciations in this classification include those which may properly be called language errors, as "jist" for "just," "git" for "get," "ketch" for "catch," and others of a like nature, and does not include mispronunciations due to unfamiliarity with a word. In this effort there was no attempt to deal with the fine points, the niceties of speech. Only the gross and glaring crudities of English were considered.

In detail, this classification was as follows:

1. Verbs:
  - a) Past and perfect participle confused.
  - b) Misuse of "had" and "got," use of "ain't."
  - c) Agreement with subject in number; e.g., "He don't."
  - d) Sequence of tenses.
  - e) Uses of "shall" and "will."
  - f) Use of "and" with infinitive; e.g., "try and go."
2. Double negatives.
3. Pronunciations—"just," "get," final *g*, "for," "asked," "February," "height."
4. Pronouns:
  - a) Case forms:
    - (1) In compound subject.
    - (2) Object of preposition or verb.
    - (3) After copula.
    - (4) In compounds; e.g., "themselves."
  - b) Pronoun used for adjective; e.g., "them books."
  - c) In double subject; e.g., "John he did the work."
  - d) Indefinite reference.
5. Adverbs:
  - a) Use of adjective for adverb.
  - b) "This here," "that there," etc.
6. Colloquialisms, provincialisms:

"Lots" for many or much; "mad" for angry; "learn" for teach; "get" with infinitive, as, "get to go"; "like" as a conjunction, as "He felt like he could do it"; introductory "well," "why," "now," "so."

This outline was given to the teachers and they were asked to watch for errors on these points for a given time and report again. This second report specified the errors noted under each head of the outline and recorded also the comparative frequency of occurrence. When these reports were collected and tabulated it was possible to tell what our situation was. No scientific exactness can be claimed for the results obtained in this way. Yet, though there was not scientific accuracy in obtaining the data, there is such a uniformity of results in the reports as to justify certain conclusions.

Table I shows the percentages of errors in each grade that are due to each of the six classes of mistakes. Of the total errors

reported from the eight grades 40.1 per cent are verb errors, 3.4 per cent are double negatives; mispronunciations cause 20.4 per cent, the misuse of pronouns 17.2 per cent, adverb errors 5.8 per cent, and colloquialisms 12.9 per cent. According to these totals over 60 per cent of the errors are due to misuse of verbs and mispronunciations.

TABLE I  
CLASSIFICATION OF ERRORS

Grades	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
1. Verbs . . . . .	49.5	48.1	32.8	34.0	40.9	43.7	37.0	36.6	40.1
2. Double negatives . . . . .	3.6	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.7	3.3	3.2	2.9	3.4
3. Pronunciations . . . . .	16.0	18.1	21.8	22.5	16.6	21.6	24.7	17.3	20.4
4. Misuse of pronouns . . . . .	18.8	17.1	16.8	17.2	19.3	14.9	14.9	18.3	17.2
5. Adverbs . . . . .	5.5	4.7	5.8	6.1	6.4	5.2	5.8	6.9	5.8
6. Colloquialisms, etc. . . . .	8.2	9.0	14.9	14.8	12.9	11.5	12.3	18.3	12.9

The most disconcerting feature of the table is disclosed by a consideration of the percentages by grades. Verbs cause the following percentages of the total errors: first grade 49.5, second grade 48.1, third grade 32.8, fourth grade 34.0, fifth grade 40.9, sixth grade 43.7, seventh grade 37.0, and eighth grade 36.6. Mispronunciations for the eight grades in order run as follows: 16.0, 18.1, 21.8, 22.5, 16.6, 21.6, 24.7, 17.3. The percentages for misuse of pronouns for the grades in order are 18.8, 17.1, 16.8, 17.2, 19.3, 14.9, 14.9, 18.3. On these last two the records for the first and eighth grades are nearly the same with but slight variation in the grades between. Double negatives run with even less variation as follows: 3.6, 3.3, 3.2, 3.2, 3.7, 3.3, 3.2, 2.9. The total variation there is only eight-tenths of a per cent. The first grade records 3.6, the seventh 3.2, but the eighth drops to 2.9. On adverb errors the evidence is nearly the same, but the eighth-grade percentage of error is higher than that of the first or second grade. This may be due in part to greater exactness of the eighth-grade teachers in scoring, their teaching of technical grammar making them keener to note this point, and in part to the fact that the upper-grade pupils use more modifying elements in their sentences than the younger children and consequently have more frequent opportunity for error. On colloquialisms the record of an

increasing percentage of error in the higher grades is due to more exacting standards on the part of upper-grade teachers in noting these errors. The primary grades recorded chiefly the use of "lots" for "many," "mad" for "angry," "learn" for "teach," some provincial perfect tense forms, and the use of unnecessary introductory words, as "well," "why," "now," "so." The higher grades record a much greater variety of errors, as "in" for "into," "between" for "among," "without" for "unless," "go to" for "intend to," "took and," "went and," "kind of," "what for" instead of "why," "guess" for "think," "can" for "may"; use of superlative for comparative degree, "at" as in "Where is it at?" "in" as in "Do you want in?" Yet these expressions are not restricted in their use to the grammar grades.

The first period of observation disclosed the fact that the great mass of English errors fall readily into six classes. The tabulation of the results of the second period of observation showed that the percentage of error due to these causes was relatively constant or increased slightly through the grades.

TABLE II  
DISTRIBUTION OF VERB ERRORS

Grades	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
1. Past perfect participle . . . . .	52.8	47.3	45	48.3	44.7	48.3	59.6	47.3	48.8
2. Use of "ain't" and misuse of "had" and "got" . . . . .	22.2	18.8	21	22.9	22.4	19.8	15.8	18.9	20.4
3. Lack of agreement with subject in number . . . . .	7.4	7.9	10	9.2	9.2	7.7	8.8	8.4	8.2
4. Sequence of tenses . . . . .	1.8	.9	4	1.1	3.8	4.4	...	4.0	2.6
5. Misuse of "shall" and "will" . . . . .	2.8	6.9	3	4.6	7.9	6.6	7.0	6.7	5.4
6. Use of "and" with infinitive for "to" . . . . .	5.5	4.9	8	4.6	5.2	5.5	3.5	8.1	5.7
7. Colloquialisms, etc. . . . .	7.4	12.8	9	9.2	6.6	7.7	5.2	9.4	8.6

Verb errors, causing 40.1 per cent of the total errors reported, were further tabulated. Table II shows the distribution of verb errors in the seven classes of errors reported. Of the total of verb errors almost 50 per cent—48.8 per cent—are due to confusion of past and perfect participle forms, and this percentage is comparatively constant throughout the grades. To this 50 per cent of verb errors may be added 20 per cent, again relatively uniform throughout the grades, due to the use of "ain't" and the misuse of "had"

as in "had ought," and of "got" as in "have got." This makes 70 per cent of the verb errors or almost 30 per cent of the total errors heard from our pupils due to confusion of past and perfect participle forms, the use of "ain't," and the misuse of "had" and "got." Lack of agreement with the subject in number totals 8.2 per cent of the verb errors, and colloquialisms in the use of verbs, as "get to go," "try and see" for "try to see," etc., total 8.6 per cent.

The report from each teacher showed the score on the verbs she heard misused. On combining these reports it was found that a very few verbs cause the majority of the errors. Each verb reported by a number of the teachers was scored separately and all others were combined. This tabulation showed that thirteen verbs cause 85.1 per cent of all the errors in past tense and perfect participles reported, and of these thirteen, four verbs, "see," "do," "come," "go," caused 51.8 per cent of the errors.

TABLE III

PERCENTAGE OF ERRORS IN PAST TENSE AND PERFECT PARTICIPLES CLASSIFIED

Verbs	Grades								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
See.....	14.0	14.6	22.2	21.4	17.6	15.9	14.7	14.2	16.8
Come.....	12.2	8.3	11.1	16.6	8.8	9.1	8.8	5.7	10.3
Do.....	12.2	12.5	15.5	19.0	17.6	13.6	11.7	17.1	14.7
Go.....	7.0	12.5	13.3	7.1	8.8	13.6	8.8	8.6	10.0
Run.....	7.0	8.3	6.6	0	5.8	6.8	8.8	8.6	5.9
Sit.....	7.0	6.3	2.2	9.5	5.8	6.8	0	0	5.0
Break.....	5.2	2.1	0	0	2.9	0	0	5.7	2.0
Lie.....	7.0	2.1	2.2	7.1	8.8	4.5	2.9	0	4.4
Give.....	3.5	6.3	6.6	2.4	5.8	6.8	2.9	0	4.4
Begin.....	0	4.1	2.2	0	2.9	9.1	5.8	5.7	3.5
Ring.....	0	4.1	4.4	2.4	0	4.5	0	8.6	2.9
Take.....	0	2.1	4.4	2.4	5.8	2.3	0	0	2.0
Write.....	0	2.1	2.2	2.4	8.8	4.5	2.9	5.7	3.2
All others.....	24.5	14.5	6.6	9.5	0	2.3	32.3	25.7	14.4

Thus far in our attempt we had only defined our situation. Up to this time the task of correcting English had seemed huge and indefinable, there seemed so many errors, and each pupil had his own list of difficulties. He did not know just what they were and

the teacher did not know. Maybe he did not know of a single error he was making, maybe the teacher could mention several as belonging to a given pupil, and maybe she could only say that she heard such and such errors in her room but that she felt there were many others. Yet, by this tabulation, the great majority of the errors fell easily into six classes.

Before proceeding to remedies for the situation it was desirable to get a record of individual status with regard to these points in order to measure progress. To get a record on all these points would not be impossible but it would take much time to secure it. It was therefore decided to obtain the standing of the pupils on a part of the points only. For the first four grades the pupils were scored on their use of the verbs "see," "come," "do," and "go," and the next four grades, in addition to these, were scored on the use of "ain't," the misuse of "had" and "got," double negatives, mispronunciations, misuse of pronouns and adverbs. Each teacher prepared a card bearing the names of her pupils down the left hand side followed by columns labeled with the various errors. The teacher then tried by a conversation with the individual, carried on in a rather free and easy, unstilted fashion, on the playground or in study period, to get each pupil's record on these points for five uses of the point she was scoring. The teacher's attempt was to get the record without the pupil suspecting her aim. These records were completed comparatively early in the second year's work on English usage. Upon the completion of the records the teacher conferred with the individual over his status and the pupil then knew for the first time just how frequently he was prone to make certain mistakes and he could the more intelligently correct himself. Varying exercises for drill on correct forms were devised and used throughout the year, and the pupils were encouraged in every way to greater alertness in eliminating their own mistakes on the points scored and on others.

In June the pupils were tested a second time according to the former plan, and a very striking improvement was indicated. But there were several factors which operated to make the figures unreliable as an exact measure of progress. In the first place, it was impossible to obtain the second record without the pupils

realizing the purpose; hence they were careful in the expressions used. At the close of the first semester most of the classes passed to a different teacher; the conditions of giving the second test probably varied, therefore, from the first one to some extent. Some few teachers obtained their second record by means of written work. As written work is more studied than oral, such records were unsatisfactory. Despite these factors which tended to make the figures an inexact measure of progress, the evidences of marked gains were indisputable.

Subsequent work has followed substantially the plan used in the first two years and the definite field of attack has rendered the corrective work more intelligent and more effective than formerly.

#### THE MECHANICS OF ENGLISH

In the past five years there has been developed a plan for measuring the success of the teaching of formal English. In the first two years of this period each teacher's program provided for five English lessons each week. This term included story-telling, dramatization, correction of errors in English usage, above the third grade a written lesson each week with correction of errors, and the teaching of the points outlined:

#### ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE

FIRST GRADE—	I. <i>Capitals.</i>	1. Beginning of sentence. 2. Proper names.
	II. <i>Punctuation.</i>	1. Period at end of sentence.
SECOND GRADE—	I. <i>Capitals.</i>	1. Beginning of sentences. 2. Proper names. 3. "Mr.," "Mrs.," "Miss," "I."
	II. <i>Punctuation.</i>	1. Period at end of sentence. 2. Question mark. (Teacher to give correct form when required.)
THIRD GRADE—	I. <i>Capitals.</i>	1. Names of days and months. 2. Abbreviations of names of days and months. 3. Names of persons and places.
	II. <i>Punctuation.</i>	1. Question mark. 2. Period.



- FOURTH GRADE—
- I. *Capitals.*
    1. Initials.
    2. Direct quotations.
    3. Names of Deity and Bible.
    4. Every line of poetry.
  - II. *Punctuation.*
    1. Exclamation point.
    2. Quotation marks and comma in direct quotations.
    3. Comma after name of person addressed.
    4. Apostrophe to denote possession. (Teacher to distinguish between singular and plural form when occasion requires.)
  - III. *Heading of papers.*
  - IV. *Paragraph and margin.*
  - V. *Friendship letters.*
- FIFTH GRADE—
- I. *Punctuation.*
    1. Comma in a series.
    2. Apostrophe in contractions, in possessive, singular and plural.
    3. Hyphen in word separated at end of line.
  - II. *Paragraph, margin.*
  - III. *Simple business letters, order for papers, etc.*
- SIXTH GRADE—
- I. *Punctuation.*
    1. Comma in appositive expressions and interjected expressions.
  - II. *Business letters.*
  - III. *Longer orders.*
  - IV. *Applications for positions.*
  - V. *Answers to advertisements.*
- SEVENTH GRADE—
- I. *Invitations and answers.*
  - II. "O," "oh."
- EIGHTH GRADE—
- I. *Simple compositions*, maximum of one page, for testing command of language, and correct use of punctuation marks.

At the end of this period an exercise formulated by the head of the English department<sup>1</sup> of the high school was used to test accuracy in the mechanics of writing a simple passage in English. This test was given early in the first term of the school year of 1911-12 in all

<sup>1</sup>Prepared by Miss Katherine Forster as part of a study which she made for the Department of English, of the University of Chicago.

the grades above the third in the elementary schools and throughout the high school. Another test of a similar nature was given just before the close of the first semester and a third was given near the end of the school year. These three tests were prepared by the same person and were given according to exact directions.

#### FIRST TEST, GIVEN IN SEPTEMBER, 1911

Two pots had been left on the bank of a river, one of brass and one of earthenware. When the tide rose they both floated off down the stream. Now the earthen pot tried its best to keep aloof from the brass one which cried out: "Fear nothing, friend, I will not strike you." "But I may come too close to you," said the other, "and whether I hit you, or you hit me, I shall suffer for it."

#### DIRECTIONS TO DICTATOR

1. Read entire fable to class once.
2. Read sentence 1 twice. Give signal, "Write."
3. Read sentence 2 twice, etc.
4. Read sentence 3 to colon twice, etc.
5. Complete the reading of sentence 3, etc.
6. Read sentence 4 to "and whether," etc.
7. Complete sentence 4, etc.

#### DIRECTIONS FOR MARKING

Capitals	Punctuation	Spelling
1-3. Beginning of sentences	1. Colon (sentence 3).	1. Two, to, too
2, 3, 4.	2-3. Commas before and after "friend."	2. Earthenware
4. "Fear" (sentence 3).	4-5. Commas before and after "said the other."	3. Tide
5. "I" (sentence 4).	6. Quotation marks (sentence 3).	4. Floated
	7-10. Quotation marks (sentence 4).	5. Its
		6. Tried
		7. Aloof
		8. One
		9. Which
		10. Whether

#### THIRD TEST, GIVEN IN MAY, 1912

##### "THE FOX AND THE GOAT"

Once a fox fell into a well and could not get out. A goat coming by asked the fox what he was doing down there. "I am drinking this sweet water," said the fox. "Come down and try some." When the goat jumped down the fox sprang upon the goat's back and leaped out. The goat called, "How am I to get out?" "You should have thought of that before you got in," replied the fox.

The directions to dictator were similar to those in Test 1.

DIRECTIONS FOR MARKING

Capitals	Punctuation	Spelling
1. <i>A</i> goat . . . .	1. Period after "there."	1. Could
2. <i>When</i> the . . . .	2-3. Quotation marks, "I . . . . water."	2. Coming
3. <i>The</i> goat . . . .	4. Comma after "water."	3. There
4. <i>How</i> am . . . .	5. Period after "some."	4. Water
5. <i>I</i> to get out?	6. Apostrophe in "goat's."	5. Some
	7. Period after "out."	6. Sprang
	8. Comma after "called."	7. Leaped (or jumped).
	9. Quotation marks "How . . . . out."	8. Called
	10. Question mark after "out."	9. Thought
		10. Replied

For convenience in marking, the papers were ranked on five points in capitalization, ten in punctuation, and ten in spelling, making a total of twenty-five points, each receiving 4 per cent. Each point selected was chosen as a fair test of ability to use the mechanics of writing English.

TABLE IV

PERCENTAGES MADE BY GRADES IN THE DICTATION TESTS FOR SEPTEMBER, 1911, AND MAY, 1912

GRADE	CAPITALS		PUNCTUATION		SPELLING		AVERAGE		GAIN
	Septem-ber, 1911	May, 1912	Septem-ber, 1911	May, 1912	Septem-ber, 1911	May, 1912	Septem-ber, 1911	May, 1912	
4B. . . . .	77	81	4	54	33	79	38	71	33
4A. . . . .	79	84	11	60	42	84	44	76	32
5B. . . . .	82	86	21	68	55	85	53	78	25
5A. . . . .	79	87	19	72	56	87	51	83	32
6B. . . . .	79	87	32	79	64	88	58	84	26
6A. . . . .	80	91	43	84	76	90	66	88	22
7B. . . . .	83	90	52	84	75	92	70	88	18
7A. . . . .	90	91	61	84	79	93	77	89	12
8B. . . . .	91	94	61	88	81	93	78	91	13
8A. . . . .	91	95	62	89	84	95	79	93	14

Table IV shows the percentage made by each class in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and their average. The grades recorded on any one line for September and May were not made by the same pupils but by the first- and second-term classes of a given grade.

The most striking record in the first test is that in punctuation. The percentages are very low, despite the fact that for over two

years the pupils had been taught formal points according to an outline arranged definitely and progressively. As compared with the grades in punctuation those for capitalization are fairly satisfactory. The very poor records in spelling were caused chiefly by the "to, too, two" combination, by "which," which has the record for being misspelled more than any other word<sup>1</sup> in the language, by "whether" and "its."

After this first test, more definite work in teaching the use of mechanical points was given in each grade throughout the year, with especial stress on the use of the question mark and period at the end of the sentence, the punctuation of a divided quotation, the exclamation mark, and capitals for the beginning of a sentence, of a direct quotation, and of a proper name. Table IV shows the percentages attained after the year's work along these lines and the average gain made by each class. The greatest gains are in punctuation, but the gains in the average of the capitalization, punctuation, and spelling are marked also. In the first test, that for September, 1911, the average standing ranged from 38 per cent in the 4B to 79 per cent in the 8A, a difference of 41 per cent. In the test at the end of the year the lowest standing was 71 per cent in the 4B and the highest was 93 per cent in the 8A, a range of 22 per cent. The greatest gains were made in the fourth and fifth grades and the least in the seventh and eighth grades, which accounts for the decrease in the range of percentages attained. The average gain for the year was 22.7 per cent. This is practically the gain of the sixth grade. The greatest gains were attained by the lower grades because, as their first grades indicate, there was a greater chance for improvement. The law of diminishing returns may account, in part, for the relatively small gains in the seventh and eighth grades; and the fact that grammar is introduced in the middle of the seventh year and the number of lessons in composition is, at that time, reduced from five to three a week will account for a part of the decrease.

This year's work demonstrated clearly that our previous work had not produced habits of correctness and accuracy in writing English, and that the additional stress on mechanical points through

<sup>1</sup> Franklin W. Jones, University of South Dakota Publication, *Concrete Investigation of the Material of English Spelling*, p. 22.

frequent dictation and other exercises did increase precision in writing. It was therefore decided to continue the use of such exercises with periodical tests of a similar nature.

Since that time a test has been given at the beginning and the close of each semester. The tests given near the end of the semester furnish a fair estimate of the work accomplished.

In 1912, the test given was:

"THE LAMP AND THE SUN"

DECEMBER, 1912

Once a lamp stood in a window and looked at the setting sun. "You are a pretty little fellow," he said to the sun, "but I have a clearer, finer, brighter light than you have." "Puff!" said the wind, and out went the light. As the mistress of the house kindled the flame again, the wind whispered, "Perhaps you'll now hold your peace. The sun and the stars do not need to be kindled as you do."

DIRECTIONS TO DICTATOR

1. Read entire story to class once.
2. Read sentence 1 twice. Give signal, "Write."
3. Read entire sentence 2. Re-read to "but I have." Give signal to write.
4. Read remainder of sentence 2. Give signal, "Write."
5. Read sentence 3 twice. Give signal, "Write."
6. Read entire sentence 4. Re-read to "and the wind." Give signal, "Write."
7. Read remainder of sentence 4. Give signal, "Write."
8. Read last sentence twice. Give signal, "Write."

DIRECTIONS FOR MARKING

Grade papers without correcting them. Let the first mark be for capitals, the second for punctuation, the third for spelling. The marks should represent the number of points that are correct. Enter grades on record sheet with grades of September dictation so that each pupil may keep track of his own gains.

Capitals	Punctuation	Spelling
1. You are a . . . .	1. Quotation marks around "You . . . . fellow."	1. Lamp
2. Puff . . . .	2, 3, 4. Commas after "fellow," "sun," "clearer."	2. Sun
3. As the mistress . . . .	5. Quotation marks around "but . . . . you have."	3. Fellow
4. Perhaps . . . .	6. Exclamation point after "Puff."	4. Brighter
5. The sun . . . .	7. Quotation marks around "Puff."	5. Went
	8. Comma after "again."	6. Mistress
	9. Apostrophe in "you'll."	7. Flame
	10. Period after "peace."	8. Again
		9. Whispered
		10. Perhaps

For comparison of standings of two consecutive years the test of 1913, "The Fox and the Cat," was given in 1914.

### "THE FOX AND THE CAT"

DECEMBER 1913 AND 1914

A sly, clever fox was boasting to a cat of his tricks. "I have a whole bag of tricks," he said, "which contains a hundred ways of escaping my enemies." "I've only one," said the cat, "but it has always served me." At that moment they heard the cry of a pack of hounds coming toward them. The cat's plan was simple. She ran up a tree and hid herself among the leaves. Then she cried; "What can you do, Mr. Fox? Search well through your bag of tricks." The fox tried all his hundred tricks, but the hounds caught him at last.

#### DIRECTIONS TO DICTATOR

1. Read entire story to class once.
2. Read sentence 1 twice. Give signal, "Write."
3. Read entire sentence 2. Re-read to "which." Give signal, "Write."
4. Read remainder of sentence 2. Give signal, "Write."
5. Read the rest (except the last sentence) a sentence at a time, reading each sentence twice before giving signal to write.
6. Read entire last sentence. Re-read to "but the hounds." Give signal, "Write."
7. Read remainder of last sentence. Give signal, "Write."

#### DIRECTIONS FOR MARKING

Capitals	Punctuation	Spelling
1. <i>I</i> have a . . . .	1. Comma after "sly."	1. Boasting
2. <i>At</i> that moment . . . .	2. Quotation marks around "I . . . .	2. Whole
3. <i>What</i> . . . .	tricks."	3. Which
4. <i>Mr.</i> . . . .	3. Quotation marks around "which	4. Hundred
5. <i>Fox</i> . . . .	. . . . enemies."	5. Moment
	4. Apostrophe in "I've."	6. Coming
	5. Comma after "one."	7. Simple
	6. Apostrophe in "cat's."	8. Cried
	7. Period after "leaves."	9. Search
	8. Comma after "cried."	10. Caught
	9. Period after "Mr."	
	10. Interrogation point.	

Table V shows the continuous gains made by any grade from year to year as the work continued. For any grade above the 4B, the gains are of a cumulative nature as the work is done by the pupil for an increasing length of time. But formal writing in English is first stressed in the 4B term and a comparison of grades made by succeeding 4B classes shows the construction value of the work.

The 4B class for the first term of 1912 attained a percentage of 70 in capitalization, the 4B class for 1913 a percentage of 80, and the 4B class for 1914 a percentage of 88. The same classes, in punctuation, ranked 31 per cent, 63 per cent, and 73 per cent, respectively, and their averages were 51 per cent, 66 per cent, and 73 per cent. The same test having been given in 1913 and 1914, the gains for any grade for that year are a very accurate measure of progress over the previous year. The 4B class of 1914 gained, over the class of 1913, 8 per cent in capitalization, 10 per cent in punctuation, and 7 per cent in their average standing. Similar gains

TABLE V

A COMPARISON OF STANDINGS IN PERCENTAGES IN DICTATION OF FABLES NEAR THE END OF THE FIRST SEMESTER (DECEMBER) FOR THE YEARS 1912, 1913, 1914

Grade	Capitals			Punctuation			Spelling			Average		
	1912	1913	1914	1912	1913	1914	1912	1913	1914	1912	1913	1914
4B.....	70	80	88	31	63	73	52	53	59	51	66	73
4A.....	77	83	89	21	73	82	43	64	71	47	73	81
5B.....	75	85	90	55	75	82	53	74	78	61	78	83
5A.....	70	88	93	56	79	89	54	79	88	60	82	90
6B.....	81	85	93	69	79	90	59	85	89	70	83	91
6A.....	71	87	94	60	82	90	57	85	92	63	85	92
7B.....	81	85	92	76	81	92	74	93	93	77	87	92
7A.....	85	92	96	77	86	92	77	94	96	79	91	85
8B.....	86	92	96	80	84	94	80	96	96	82	91	95

are made by the other classes with the least gains in grades seven and eight as was shown in Table IV for the first year's work; thus the 6B classes show a record of 81 per cent, 85 per cent, and 93 per cent in capitalization, of 69 per cent, 79 per cent, and 90 per cent in punctuation, and of 70 per cent, 83 per cent, and 91 per cent in their average standing, while the 8B classes for the same years have 86 per cent, 92 per cent, and 96 per cent in punctuation, and they averaged 92 per cent, 91 per cent, and 95 per cent. The total gain of all the classes in capitalization was 54 per cent, in punctuation 82 per cent, in spelling 39 per cent.

## EACH CLASS TRACED THROUGH THREE YEARS

The 4B of 1912 as 5B of 1913 showed a gain of 15 per cent in capitalization, 44 in punctuation, 22 in spelling, and 27 in average;

as 6B in 1914, their gain over the previous year was 8 per cent in capitalization, 15 in punctuation, and 15 in spelling—an average of 13 per cent.

The 4A of 1912 as 5A of 1913 showed a gain of 11 per cent in capitalization, 58 in punctuation, 36 in spelling, and 35 in average; as 6A in 1914 they showed a gain over the previous year of 6 per cent in capitalization, 11 in punctuation, 13 in spelling, and 10 in average.

The 5B of 1912 as 6B in 1913 showed a gain of 10 per cent in capitalization, 24 in punctuation, 32 in spelling, and 21 in average; as 7B in 1914 their gain over the previous year was 7 per cent in capitalization, 13 in punctuation, 8 in spelling, and 9 in average.

The 5A of 1912 as 6A in 1913 showed a gain of 17 per cent in capitalization, 26 in punctuation, 31 in spelling, and 25 in average; as 7A in 1914 they showed a gain over the previous year of 9 per cent in capitalization, 10 in punctuation, 11 in spelling, and 10 in average.

The 6B of 1912 as 7B in 1913 showed a gain of 4 per cent in capitalization, 12 in punctuation, 34 in spelling, and 17 in average; as 8B in 1914 their gain over the previous year was 11 per cent in capitalization, 13 in punctuation, 3 in spelling, and 9 in average.

#### CHARACTERISTICS AND GRADING OF THE DICTATION TEST

To afford a standard each test must present, as nearly as possible, material of the same character and must be marked on the same points. It should deal with a situation the meaning of which is clearly apparent and should present ideas with which pupils are reasonably familiar.

A consideration of the points marked under capitals will disclose a change to include the common uses. It was found that there is no occasion for marking capital "I," as mistakes in its use are negligible. Of the five points under capitals, two are for capitals at the beginning of sentences, one for a direct quotation following a verb, one for the title "Mr." or "Mrs.," and one for a name, as "Lion," "Fox."

In marking on punctuation, the exclamation point has been dropped as irrelevant to the written composition of the elementary



school. The interrogation point, a mark of greater difficulty, is included because of frequent necessity for its use. Of the ten points under "Punctuation," two are on the period: at the end of a sentence, for the abbreviation of title ("Mr. or "Mrs."); one for an interrogation point; two for the apostrophe: in a contraction ("I'll," "Don't"), for possessive ("bird's wing"); three for the comma: after a noun of direct address, after the first part of a broken quotation, the first comma in a series; two for quotation marks: the first part of a broken quotation, the second part of a broken quotation.

The words of the selection should be reasonably easy to spell. The ten words upon which the test is marked should be of approximately the same difficulty in any series of tests.

TABLE VI

AVERAGE OF THE STANDINGS MADE AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER DURING THE YEARS 1911-14—SEVEN TESTS

Grade	Capitals	Punctuation	Spelling	Average
4B.....	80	54	62	65
4A.....	83	61	68	70
5B.....	83	69	75	75
5A.....	87	73	78	80
6B.....	86	78	80	80
6A.....	86	79	82	82
7B.....	86	82	87	85
7A.....	89	84	90	88
8B.....	91	86	91	91

Table VI presents the averages of the standings made at the end of the seven successive semesters during the years 1911 to 1914, inclusive. The percentages in the "Average" column show a regular increase of 5 per cent for each half-year's work up to the 6B. Above the 6B the gain is, with one exception, 3 per cent. The percentages in spelling and in punctuation show substantially the same results as Tables IV and V, that is, the greatest gains in Grades 4 and 5, and less but rather regular gains in the seventh and eighth grades. The averages for capitalization present too slight a range to be satisfactory. The lower grades ranked much higher in capitalization than in punctuation at the beginning of this series of tests and they have raised their percentages in both to a

marked degree, but the upper grades have not improved in capitalization to the same degree that they have in punctuation; consequently, while they have gained somewhat, their averages are not as high as one would anticipate.

This investigation has been conducted in too limited a field and has covered too short a period of time to justify any definite conclusion as to the percentages which the grades should attain in the mechanics of English, but the results so far obtained justify the work already done and its continuation. The justification for the work is evidenced, not alone in the improvement in this one line of work, but also in a greater accuracy in the other written work of the pupils and in the increased ability of the pupils to correct their own errors, though there has, as yet, been no attempt to measure the degree of improvement on these two points.

As a result of these investigations in English usage and in the mechanics of English, we have narrowed the field, and thus made our attack more direct. The issue has been more clearly defined for both teachers and pupils, and the gains, though not measured exactly in English usage and not altogether satisfactory in either line, are clearly marked and have repaid the effort expended.